

## Postal service offers tips for mail to Kuwait and Southwest Asia

WASHINGTON (Army News Service, March 18, 2003) - APO ZIP codes for units in Kuwait and nearby countries are available only to family members and close friends of deployed soldiers, officials said, due to anthrax and other terrorist threats.

Programs that allowed the general public to send mail addressed to "Any Service Member" were cancelled more than a year ago. While these programs were popular with the public during Desert Storm and other operations, officials said security concerns and transportation constraints with military mail led to their cancellation. Web sites such as <<http://anyservicemember.navy.mil>> <http://anyservicemember.navy.mil>, and Army Knowledge Online e-mail have been suggested as alternate means to contact soldiers.

Family members who send regular mail need to use the soldier's full name (without rank), unit and APO address. Letters to Kuwait will normally take seven to 10 days, according to the Military Postal Service Agency. Priority parcels will normally take 10 to 15 days. Surface Air Mail, or SAM packages, will normally take about 24 days, according to MPSA officials.

Each country has customs regulations that apply to all incoming mail. These may include prohibitions on certain kinds of food or entertainment products.

Host countries mostly prohibit the entry of alcoholic beverages of any kind, narcotics, munitions, pork and pork by-products, pornography, and material contrary to the Islamic religion.

Letter mail is not being opened unless it appears unusually bulky, officials said, in which case it may be examined to see if it contains contraband, such as drugs. Parcel mail is being examined on a spot-check basis to determine conformity with host country customs regulations and for terrorist-type mailing.

Some military units may have additional restrictions imposed by the theater commander, such as size and weight restrictions, to ensure logistics support can handle the mail without delays. The maximum length of a package in any category is 48 inches.

Military ZIP code restrictions may change as military units move to different locations, officials said. All applicable restrictions for about 3,000 overseas military ZIP codes are entered into the U. S. Postal Service computer terminals and published in the Postal Bulletin. The general public may review details of all applicable restrictions by going to any branch post office or the USPS public web page <http://www.usps.com>. Here's how to access this file:

- a. The customer should click on the USPS web site.

- b. Type "Postal Bulletin" in the search engine, this will bring up the page for the bulletins.
- c. Click on Bulletin, On this screen the customer will see "VIEW ISSUES."
- d. At "VIEW ISSUES" click current issue and this will bring you to the PDF file.
- e. Click on PDF file and this will bring up the Postal Bulletin.
- f. At this point the customer can navigate to the Postal Bulletin page that contain the Military ZIP Code information.

Other tips the postal service advises to help ensure timely delivery of mail:

Wrap packages securely.

Liquid-filled containers tend to break.

Powdered items can open during transit causing concern over what kind of substance it is. Please pack the items in sealed plastic bags.

Contraband items are confiscated. These include alcohol, tobacco and pornography.

Label packages properly and list all contents.

There is a space on the customs form to declare if it is a gift or merchandise.

When family members send items Space Available Mail, the packages might take longer.

Families should not put the country or the base camp's city on the mail, officials said, because it might get sent through the host country's mail system.

Most areas of the Middle East have been authorized Free Mail for personal correspondence being sent from the service member overseas back to the U.S. However, family members sending mail to service members in a free mail zone must still include postage. Soldiers are briefed on the Free Mail procedures, officials said, when they are deployed to a Free Mail area.